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1973/02/16

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Chou En-lai, Premier, State Council
Chi P'eng-fei, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ch'iao Kuan-hua, Vice Minister of
Foreign Affairs
Wang Hai-jung, Assistant Foreign Minister
T'ang Wen-sheng, Interpreter
Shen Jo-yun, Interpreter
Two Notetakers

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
Richard T. Kennedy, NSC Staff
Winston Lord, NSC Staff
Jonathan T. Howe, NSC Staff
Miss Irene G. Derus, Notetaker

PLACE:

Villa #3, Peking, China

DATE AND TIME:

February 16, 1973, 2:15 - 6:00 p.m.

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PM Chou: Yes, we also don't know very well what happened. We only know that the Soviet Ambassador is carrying on certain activities. And the Soviet Ambassador to Phnom Penh has gone back to Phnom Penh.

Dr. Kissinger: As Ambassador?

PM Chou: The Soviet Ambassador.

Dr. Kissinger: They have had a Chargé there.

PM Chou: Recently there was a Chargé there, and according to information they are going to send an Ambassador there.

Dr. Kissinger: I didn't know that.

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PM Chou: That is recent information. As for the Cambodian country, why can't you accept to have negotiations with Norodom Sihanouk as head of state?

Dr. Kissinger: I don't know him as well as the Prime Minister. I understand it is a nervewracking experience. [Chou laughs.]

PM Chou: Did Senator Mansfield say any words or discuss with you?

Dr. Kissinger: Oh, yes, Senator Mansfield is prepared to conduct negotiations with Sihanouk.

PM Chou: But unfortunately Prince Sihanouk wasn't in Peking. He was elsewhere. So your people say that after the President was elected for a second term, then Senator Mansfield would come again to China.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, but he is not qualified to discuss that for us, and he would only confuse the situation. He is too emotional about this. This is not an emotional problem. I will - is the Prime Minister finished with his observation?

PM Chou: I have just raised this question and see what you have.

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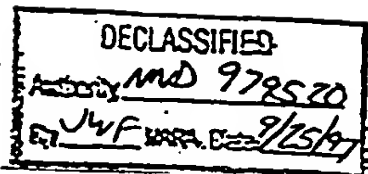
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Dr. Kissinger: I have been told that [pointing to a paper being held by the Chinese side]. Is this the article? I haven't read the text. I just read a summary. Actually the Prime Minister, Pham Van Dong, was astonished when we said that once we give them money for certain categories they can use it for anything within that category. He apparently wasn't used to treatment like that from other countries. [Chou laughs.]

But it is important for us to be able to do this. We want the countries of Indochina to be independent. We have no other interest in that area. We don't need any bases in Indochina. But for us to be able to establish this relationship, the DRV must cooperate to some extent. If there is no ceasefire in Laos and no withdrawal of forces, how can we ask our Congress to give money? It is psychologically impossible. Article 20(b) of the Agreement says foreign forces must be withdrawn from Laos and Cambodia without any condition. And we are prepared to withdraw our forces, and we have talked to Thailand, and it will withdraw its forces. So the DRV must live up to this obligation. Now they are very close to a ceasefire in Laos, and I frankly do not understand what is delaying it. Perhaps they will conclude it today.



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PM Chou: We will be able to get information everyday from official sources as to whether or not it has been signed.

Dr. Kissinger: Well, I will find out when I get back.

Now about Cambodia. It is obviously a very complex situation, and we have no particular interest in any one party.

PM Chou: From the very beginning you would not admit that. I refer to the coup d'etat. It was not done by the CIA. So after you examine your work, you will find how it was not done by them.

Dr. Kissinger: It was not done by them.

PM Chou: Like the situation in Laos.

Dr. Kissinger: It is a different situation.

PM Chou: Then who did it?

Dr. Kissinger: I have told the Prime Minister once before when I first learned of the coup d'etat I thought Sihanouk had done it, that he would come back after three or four days. I thought he had done it so he could show Hanoi that his troops there made the population very unhappy. That was my honest opinion.

PM Chou: Yes, you have told me about it.

Dr. Kissinger: That was my sincere conviction.

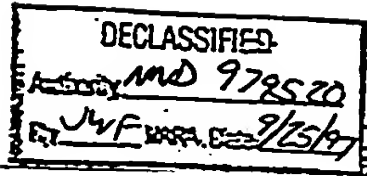
PM Chou: But I was quite skeptical about the CIA so I asked you to make a study of it.

Dr. Kissinger: I did make a study of it. Why should I lie to you today? It makes no difference today. The CIA did not do it.

PM Chou: So it was done by France?

Dr. Kissinger: It could have been done by France. It could have been done by other interests. It could even perhaps have been done independently by Saigon. But it was not done by America nor did we know about it. At that

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time our policy was to attempt to normalize our relations with Sihanouk, and you will remember that the Prime Minister and I exchanged some letters at that time. We have always been opposed to the presence of North Vietnamese troops in Cambodia. We are opposed to that today. We think the North Vietnamese should withdraw their troops into Vietnam. We did not think they had the right to maintain troops on foreign territory.

Now we believe that there should be a political negotiation in Cambodia, and we think that all the political forces should be represented there. And that does not mean that the existing government must emerge as the dominant force, but how can we, when we recognize one government, engage in a direct negotiation with Sihanouk? This is out of the question. But if there were a ceasefire and if North Vietnamese forces were withdrawn we would encourage a political solution in which Sihanouk would play a very important role. We don't want necessarily Hanoi to dominate Laos and Cambodia, but we will not support in either of these countries, and certainly not in Cambodia, one political force against the others.

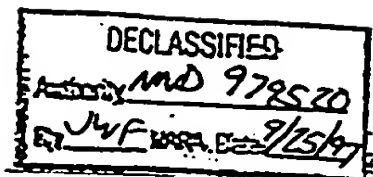
But if the war continues -- first of all, if the North Vietnamese -- they are violating Article 20(b) of the Agreement. Secondly, it will be almost impossible for us to go to our Congress and ask for economic support for a country that has its troops on foreign territory. It is difficult enough as long as they have troops in the South, but that we can treat as a special case. We believe a solution consistent with the dignity of Sihanouk is possible, and we have so far refused overtures from other countries that have different views. But there has to be some interruption in military activity because otherwise our Air Force will continue to be active on one side, and there is no end to it. My difficulty in meeting with Prince Sihanouk is no reflection on Prince Sihanouk. It has to do with the situation there.

PM Chou: France has maintained relationships with both sides. And the same is true of the Soviet Union, so things have been so complicated.

Dr. Kissinger: France wants to pick up what is left over without any risk and without any investment. [Laughter]

PM Chou: Three years ago during the time of the occurrence of the Cambodian incident, the French had sent Prince Sihanouk to the Soviet Union so Lon Nol at the time took a further step to announce the overthrow of the Cambodian monarchy and to abolish the royal system. So as a result Kosygin sent

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Sihanouk to Peking. So in standing on the just side we should give them support. Further, Lon Nol at the time counted on us to maintain the original relationship, and Lon Nol even said that it was permissible to use Sihanouk Harbor to transport weapons to South Vietnam as was done by Sihanouk before. And prior to that Sihanouk also asked Lon Nol to be in charge of this matter -- that is to transport weapons to South Vietnam, and he gained money out of that. So Lon Nol was most familiar with this matter. And now after engaging in subversive activities he wanted to directly collect the taxes so that was too unreasonable and unjust so we rejected him. During that month - more than one month, they continued their initiative - our Ambassador proved that. At the beginning he refused to let our Ambassador leave Cambodia.

Dr. Kissinger: Well, I have always believed that if Sihanouk had returned to Phnom Penh rather than Moscow, he would still be King or Prime Minister.

PM Chou: And he might be arrested.

Dr. Kissinger: Yes, possibly.

PM Chou: Because Lon Nol would do anything he wished to.

Dr. Kissinger: Well, we will never know this, but in any event....

PM Chou: Do you know Lon Nol very well?

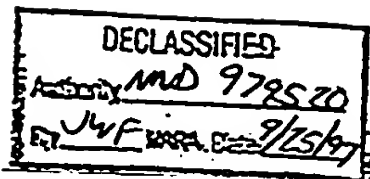
Dr. Kissinger: Once. I didn't think he is an extremely energetic man.

PM Chou: He is half paralyzed.

Dr. Kissinger: He is actually very anxious still to establish relations with you.

PM Chou: No, we wouldn't do that with such a person. You should also not deal with such a man who carries on subversive activities against the King. It is just for you not to support India in dismantling Pakistan. On that one we stood together because you supported justice. But we think it is not very -- it is not fair for you to admit Lon Nol.

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Dr. Kissinger: But I think it might be possible to find an interim solution that is acceptable to both sides and I think, for example, that the Lon Nol people would be willing to negotiate with the Chief Minister of Sihanouk here. [To Mr. Lord: What is his name again?] Penn Nouth. And that might lead to an interim government which could then decide who should be Chef d'etat. This possibility has also occurred to us.

PM Chou: Would that do if you go without Lon Nol?

Dr. Kissinger: The end result could well be without Lon Nol.

PM Chou: No only the Prime Minister of Sihanouk wouldn't engage in such a negotiation, but there is the Khmer resistance in the interior area in Cambodia.

Dr. Kissinger: What would not be acceptable?

PM Chou: To take Lon Nol. . .

Dr. Kissinger: Well, it doesn't have to be Lon Nol himself. It could be somebody from that government.

PM Chou: Have you had any contact with the Soviet Union and French on this point, or would they go to you for that?

Dr. Kissinger: No we have not talked to France at all. The Soviet Union had very vague conversations, their Ambassador with me. But I thought they were leaning more towards Lon Nol than the other side. They were certainly not leaning towards Sihanouk.

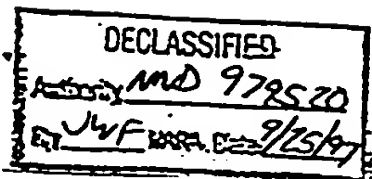
PM Chou: Because he is not so fond of Sihanouk at all.

Dr. Kissinger: But they made no concrete -- because I said to the Vice Minister when he was in New York, "I want to talk to the Prime Minister." I have talked to Le Duc Tho about it, and he said he is in favor of negotiation. He said they wouldn't make the final decision in Hanoi, but, of course, you will be in direct contact with them.

PM Chou: And he told me that you said that you would go to me and talk.

Dr. Kissinger: That is right. He said to me first, that it would be best if I talked to you, and then I said I would be glad to. Le Duc Tho always has a slight problem with his time sequence.

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PM Chou: So this question is quite similar to the question of the Secretary General. [Laughter] Of course, since Sihanouk is in China we cannot but tell him your opinion in our wording, but of course, we have our own position on this question.

Dr. Kissinger: We would appreciate it if he would not repeat it in newspapers and interviews. His self-discipline isn't up to Chinese standards.

PM Chou: It is impossible. He often told others what I had told him, and also some times when I hadn't told him. [Laughter] So the word wouldn't be very clear what the Premier had actually told him. So after learning about your ideas and what we learned about it, we wouldn't tell him all about it. Perhaps he would broadcast it and it would be carried in Chinese newspapers, and it wouldn't be all right for us not to carry it in our newspapers. The freedom our People's Daily has given to Sihanouk is much greater than any freedom granted to any Heads of State by any country at all. General DeGaulle didn't get freedom like that when he was in Britain. He would be sure to include it in his message if he was told something.

We support his Five Point Declaration of March 23, 1970. That time you were not involved. And we also supported the declaration issued jointly by the Head of State, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister of Cambodia which was issued on January 26. And later the three other Ministers in the interior area of Cambodia also supported this declaration. This is still our position. Do you know the Five Point Declaration of March 23, 1970?

Dr. Kissinger: No.

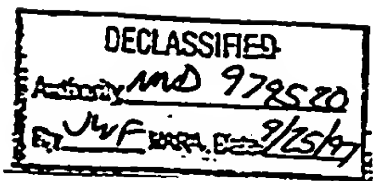
PM Chou: At that time you were not involved with it.

Dr. Kissinger: This is an extremely unusual event. None of my colleagues have ever heard me admit I didn't know something, but I will know it as soon as I can get a copy. Have your English or French copies?

PM Chou: Both.

Dr. Kissinger: Either one I can read. I have not studied it, but the major problem, frankly, is not the formal position but what evolution we foresee. And from our side we are prepared to cooperate with you, if we can find a way with him to come up with a solution consistent with his dignity.

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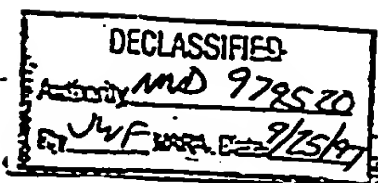
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PM Chou: You have told us your ideas, and we have learned about it, but at the moment perhaps this is not possible. We will consider it again, and next time I will tell you our ideas.

Dr. Kissinger: All right.



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Kissinger: Oh, yes. Which suggested that our objectives may be very similar. But there is always the problem of phasing them in a relevant time period.